I. From God to Us: Jesus

The Reading: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And
Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1–7)

(When the reading is concluded, the leader takes the large blue present and displays it to the children and adults and then reads the large gift tag attached to it.)

The Leader: The gift tag on this blue box says that this present is from God to all of us. What gift could this be? It is Jesus. He is God’s gift to all who believe. A long, long time ago, God promised He would send a Savior, a Messiah who would save all people from sin.

In the Bible, we learn from St. Matthew that an angel told Joseph to take Mary as his wife and said,

The Children: “She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

The Leader: When the baby came, this fulfilled God’s promise in Isaiah 7:14, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). Jesus is the Savior God promised.

God kept His word. Jesus was the first Christmas gift, and He is still the greatest Christmas gift.

This box is blue. The color blue reminds us of Advent, the time in the Church Year when we wait to celebrate again the coming of God’s greatest gift to us, Jesus.

The Children: Thank You, God! Your gift is Jesus. (Fold hands in prayer.)
Give us faith to trust in Him. (Cross hands over heart.)
Thank You for Your word of promise: (Open hands to make open book.)
He will save us from our sin. (Lift up arms over head.)

THE SONG

Children sing stanza 1
Adults sing stanzas 2–3

Away in a Manger (LSB 364)
Text: Little Children’s Book, Philadelphia, 1885, sts. 1–2; Vineyard Songs, Louisville, 1892, st. 3, alt.
Tune: AWAY IN A MANGER, James R. Murray, 1841–1905; setting Joseph Herl, b. 1959

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
(Place hands, palms together, on one side of head.)
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
(Switch sides with hands.)
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
(Extend fingers out, making “stars,” then shield eyes for “looked.”)
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
(Hold arms in front as if holding a baby.)

(additional verses not included on sample)

II. From Jesus to Us: Forgiveness, Life, and Salvation

The Reading: And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, (Luke 2:8–13)

The Children: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!” (Luke 2:14)

(When the reading is concluded, the leader takes the large red present and displays it to the children and adults and then reads the large gift tag attached to it.)

The Leader: The gift tag says that this present is from Jesus. And it says this gift is also for all of us! I wonder what it is. Let us think about what it could be. We just heard that Jesus is “God with us.” Do you know where we find Jesus with us today? Jesus is with us in God’s Word and Sacraments, the Bible, Baptism, and Holy Communion. (As the leader says these words, he or she should walk to the location of these in your church and gesture toward them—pulpit, font, and altar.) Through these Means of Grace, Jesus brings us other gifts: the forgiveness of sins, rescue of death and the devil, and eternal salvation.

The Reading: “[You have] been buried with [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:12)

The Leader: This gift is red. It reminds us of the loving gifts Jesus won for us on the cross and, in love, gives to us.

The Children: Who gives me His special gifts? (Hands out, palms up.)
Jesus does. Jesus does. *(One hand pointing up.)*  
Gives me heaven and sins forgiven. *(Both hands up, then down)*  
Loving gifts for me. *(Hands crossed over heart.)*

**THE HYMN**  
*Children sing stanza 1 and refrain*  
*Adults sing stanzas 2–4*  

**God Loves Me Dearly (LSB 392)**  
Text: August Rische, 1819–1906; tr. composite  
Tune: GOTT IST DIE LIEBE; German; setting: *All God’s People Sing!**, 1992

1. God loves me dearly, Grants me salvation,  
   God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

**Refrain:**  
Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly,  
God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

*(additional verses not included on sample)*

### III. From Us to Others: Service

**The Reading:**  
When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

**The Children:**  
“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

**The Reading:**  
And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. *(Luke 2:15–20)*

**Recitation by Children:**  
Where cattle and donkeys and woolly sheep lay,  
*Put out hand to show imaginary animal’s location.*  
The sweet baby Jesus was born Christmas Day.  
*Sleep pose with head on hands.*  
The shepherds near Bethlehem saw a bright light  
*Shield upturned eyes.*  
While keeping their sheep on that wonderful night.  
*Hold imaginary staff.*  
The shepherds came quickly with hearts full of joy  
*Place hand over heart.*

Jesus—God’s Greatest Gift — 5
And kneeled down to worship the heavenly boy.

(Fold hands and bow head.)

(When the recitation is concluded, the leader takes the large green present and displays it to the children and adults and then reads the large gift tag attached to it.)

The Leader: The gift tag on this present says that it is from us to others. Those words mean that we give gifts to others because God first gave His gifts to us. As children of God, we live daily in our Baptism, worshiping God and helping other people. God blesses us so we can serve others. We are little gifts as we obey our parents, give presents to others at Christmas, and are kind to the people we meet. We also serve others when, like the shepherds, we tell about the greatest gift God has given us—Jesus!

The Children: We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

The Leader: This box is green. Green is the color of Christmas trees and growing things. As we hear God’s Word, we grow too. We grow as God’s children in love and service to others.

(Distribute the jingle-bell bracelets to the children. They will ring them three times at the “XXX” points in the recitation below.)

The Children: Ring the bells. XXX Tell the news. XXX God has promised us a Savior.

Ring the bells. XXX Tell the news. XXX Jesus is God’s gift to us.

Ring the bells. XXX Tell the news. XXX